

IOWA PRELIMINARY MONTHLY WEATHER SUMMARY – MAY 2012

General Summary. Temperatures averaged 65.1° or 5.0° above normal while precipitation totaled 3.51 inches or 1.05 inches less than normal. This ranks as the 14th warmest and 57th driest May among 140 years of state records. This was the warmest May since 1998 and driest since 2006.

Temperatures. Warmer than normal weather was the rule again in May as lower than normal temperatures were restricted to only seven days during the month. Temperatures reached into the 90s somewhere in the state on ten days during May with Jefferson reporting the highest reading of 96° on the 27th. Temperatures did manage to dip into the 30s on eight days but no freeze was recorded with Elkader's 34° reading on the 10th being the lowest temperature. The month appeared destined to be among the top ten warmest Mays until much cooler weather arrived at the month's end. Daytime highs on the 31st edged only into the low 50's across parts of southern and eastern Iowa.

Heating Degree Day Totals. Home heating requirements, as estimated by heating degree day totals, averaged 63% less than last May and 56% less than normal. Heating requirements for the 2011-2012 season (since July 1, 2011) averaged 22% less than last season at this time and 20% less than normal. This probably has been the mildest heating season of the historical record in Iowa.

Precipitation. Rainfall was frequent for the first week of May with a statewide average of 1.91 inches falling. However, the next two weeks were very dry with an average of only 0.18 inches falling from the 8th through the 22nd. The dry mid-month weather was fabulous for allowing rapid planting of the 2012 crops. However, frequent high winds, low humidity and high temperatures left the topsoil exceptionally dry. No measureable rain was recorded in some central and east central locations for 19 consecutive days (5th through the 23rd), an exceptional streak for a month when rain typically falls more than one day of every three. Rain came more frequently late in the month but remained less than usual over most of central and southern Iowa. However, rainfall was frequent and substantial over the northwest one-quarter of the state where some locations recorded double the usual May total. Monthly rain totals varied from 1.16 inches at Maquoketa, their lowest May total since 1992, to 8.41 inches at Sibley which was their greatest May total since 1959.

Severe Weather. The most widespread severe weather came early in the month when severe storms were reported every day from the 1st through the 6th and all nine of the preliminary May total of tornadoes occurred. The mid-month dry weather brought an extended period of quiet weather with occasional scattered severe storms reported between the 19th and 28th. Overall, the extent and severity of this May's storms was less than usual.

Spring Summary. Iowa's spring temperatures averaged 56.1° or 7.8° above normal while precipitation totaled 9.45 inches or 0.77 inch below normal. This was the warmest spring among 140 years of state records (old record 55.3° in 1977) and 57th wettest spring

(but also the driest spring since 2005). Year-to-date temperatures are also running at a record high pace averaging 44.6° or 6.9° above normal (0.6° above the previous high set for January through May 1987).

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